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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a survey of the field of the teaching of Portuguese as of 1969 based on material gathered by the author for the Luso-Brazilian Studies Survey. A general increase in enrollment and in the number of institutions teaching Portuguese on all levels of education is noted. Nineteen elementary schools, 44 high schools and an estimated 160 colleges and universities were found to teach Portuguese; figures on student enrollment are also given. For the college level, statistics on the number of students with Portuguese as major or minor subject on all degree levels are given, as well as figures on the number of persons involved in teaching Portuguese and some information on their language backgrounds. The problem of the lack of a college entrance examination (CEEB test) for Portuguese and the effect which this has on high school enrollment is dealt with in some detail. Also discussed are: teaching methods, teacher needs, the question of whether Peninsular or Brazilian Portuguese should be taught, and the possibilities for bilingual education programs in Portuguese and English. The author feels that despite seeming gains, the overall outlook for Portuguese teaching is not particularly positive. The closing of the summer institute at Vanderbilt University is seen as an especially discouraging occurrence.. (FWB)

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"The Teaching of Portuguese in the United States"
(Fifty-First Annual Meeting of the AATSP (PLDG)

Chicago, December 28-30, 1969

It is again my pleasure to address the Portuguese Language Development Group. I thank Professor Guy J. Riccio, this year's Chairman, for the opportunity to do so. Also, I thank all of you for the honor of electing me Secretary. I shall do my utmost to fulfill the duties of my office, and to assist Professor Riccio in his chairmanship.

When last I appeared before you, my words were rather ominous. I am sorry to say that they still are, despite the fact that there has been an increase in enrollment and in the number of institutions teaching Portuguese on all levels of education. The one element which for a time did, and promised to continue to raise the quality of instruction on the secondary level has been denied us, just at the time when it was doing the most good. I am speaking of the Vanderbilt Summer Institute in Portuguese. This was the first Portuguese Institute and in two summers it raised the hopes of everyone in the field that it would continue to train teachers of Portuguese for many years. It goes without saying that the Institute gave its participants prestige among their colleagues in other foreign languages when they returned to their schools. A lack of prestige is something from which teachers of Portuguese have suffered for many years, especially in my area. Through a well-organized and carefully-planned program, the participantes were provided with instruction which would help them to more efficiently disseminate the Portuguese language and Luso-Brazilian culture and civilization in their schools. Where are these teachers going to get the instruction they received at Vanderbilt now? It seems incredulous to me that the Office of Education could have fostered Portuguese studies under the NDEA and EPDA with substantial grants since 1958 only to

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only to discourage the language on the foundation level by withdrawing support from all such institutes. How can Portuguese compete with other languages which have had institutes for many years and have produced so many qualified teachers? I wonder how much is really saved by not supporting these institutes? And what will happen when someone finally realizes that we need more personnel competent in Portuguese, and in other languages? Will we have to start all over again? Are we going to be able to find the same competent personnel available to organize and staff such institutes who are willing to subject themselves again to the possibility of disappointment? How can we encourage others to participate in and contribute to this field when they see our scholars frustrated in their efforts to foster the study of a critical language and culture? Has anything really been saved or will a duplication of expenses result at some later date? These are questions that should be carefully examined and evaluated before it is too late.

I previously stated that enrollment had increased and that the number of institutions teaching Portuguese had also increased on all levels. Last year in my survey I registered 17 elementary schools teaching Portuguese. This year there are 19. There were 38 high schools reportedly teaching Portuguese last year. This number has increased to 44 this year. On the university level, the increase is from 139 institutions teaching Portuguese last year to approximately 160 this year. It is impossible to give you accurate figures as to enrollment because the response to my questionnaire this year is only slightly over 50%. I shall try to interpolate with what information I have and give you some idea of our strength. Of the 17 elementary schools teaching Portuguese last year, I have figures for only 9. They represent a total of 2,344 students. I shall assume

that this number will be approximately the same this year and add to it 311, which represents the total enrollment of two more elementary schools not included in last year's report. This brings the total up to 2,655 for 11 out of 19 schools. Last year I received enrollment figures for only 23 of the 38 high schools teaching Portuguese. The total enrollment was 2,132. I received figures for 7 more high schools not included in last years total. As in the case of the elementary school total, I have added the number 341, which represents the total enrollment in Portuguese for these 7 high schools. The high school total now stands at 2,469 for 30 out of 44 high schools. The total enrollment figure for the elementary and high school Portuguese programs is 5,124. I think I can safely round this number off to approximately 5,500 by taking into account the increases that I know have taken place in some schools but for which I have still not received documentation.

To my knowledge, there has been no enrollment total for Portuguese in the colleges since the MLA published the results of research conducted by Nina Greer Herslow and James F. Dersham in 1966. It was entitled Foreign Language Enrollments in Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 1965. I refer to pages 24-36, which tell us that there were 90 institutions teaching Portuguese with a total of 3,028 students. Last year I found that 139 institutions were teaching Portuguese. This year I believe a conservative estimate of 160 would not be too far off. Of the 90 institutions which have responded to my questionnaire so far this year, I register a total enrollment in Portuguese of 3,321. As you can see, the enrollment in these 90 institutions has already surpassed that of the 90 mentioned in the MLA report. I have still not heard from some 70 colleges and universities, many of which have extensive

programs in Portuguese. I would like to point out, however, that the enrollment figures, in many cases, were made by course. It is possible, therefore, that a student might have been counted twice or three times, depending on the number of courses in which he was registered. The total, then, represents a possible maximum.

Of the maximum enrollment in Portuguese in the colleges and universities of 3,321, I submit the following breakdown by degree: 131 B.A. major, 383 B.A. minor, 36 M.A. major, 88 M.A. minor, 41 Ph.D. major, 106 Ph.D. minor, and 2,536 studying the language but not toward a degree. There are 203 people involved in teaching Portuguese and/or Luso Brazilian studies in these 90 colleges and universities. This number includes professors, instructors, lecturers, and teaching assistants. Of this number 47 speak Portuguese as their native language, 89 are non-natives but speak the language with native fluency, and 67 and non-native speakers. The majority of the colleges and universities teach the language in a Brazilian context while the majority of the high schools and elementary schools are teaching it in a Peninsular context. This is due to the larger number of schools teaching Portuguese being located in Southern New England where there is a large concentration of Luso-Americans and Portuguese immigrants.

A variety of methods are used in the teaching of Portuguese on all levels of instruction, but the method most often listed was the audio-lingual. This was followed by the eclectic, traditional grammar, and the audio-visual. The basic language texts most often used were: Ellison, et al. Modern Portuguese; Leroy, Português para principiantes; and Português Contemporâneo by Abreu and Raméh. Other books mentioned were: Vidigal, Aprendo Português; Martins and Menton, Teatro brasileiro contemporâneo;

Hamilton and Fahs, Contos do Brasil; Rossi, Vida brasileira; Hoge, Oral Brazilian Portuguese; Sá Pereira, Brazilian Portuguese Grammar; DePaula and Magro, Português: Conversação e Gramática; Williams, Introductory Portuguese Grammar; etc.

Among the most commonly mentioned teaching needs were the following: slides of Portugal and Brazil; tapes of plays, poetry readings, etc.; an intermediate (2nd year) grammar book; a list of materials available; a list of competent teachers available; sheet music from Portugal and Brazil; graded histories of Portugal and Brazil; vocabulary building materials; a book of structured exercises; films of Portugal and Brazil; a book for composition and conversation; a book for culture and civilization; graded readers; anthologies for survey courses of Portuguese and Brazilian literatures; records; a list of available speakers; magazines; more students, more teachers, and more money. From the New England area comes a request for a basic text geared to Peninsular Portuguese. I support this request because at least 90% of the students studying Portuguese in my area already have some knowledge of Portuguese. They have developed speech patterns, extensive vocabularies and a definite Peninsular pronunciation from their parents and/or neighbors. Whether their "sotaque" can be considered standard is another matter. In any case, it is easier to bring them up to a Peninsular standard than it is to a Brazilian one. It is very confusing at times, especially for the student who knows no Portuguese, to hear Peninsular "sotaque", syntax and vocabulary in the classroom which do not conform to what he sees in his text or hears on the tapes. Most teachers in my area spend a great deal of time explaining differences. These differences should be pointed out, but not in an elementary class before the student has had a chance to learn one well.

A problem, still unsolved, which has plagued the teacher of Portuguese, especially on the high school level, is the lack of a college entrance examination (CEEB Test) for Portuguese. It was this problem which initiated my first survey in an attempt to prove to my students and to guidance counsellors that the lack of such a test was not a deterrent to getting into college. Many colleges make provisions to handle such cases. In Why Study Portuguese? compiled and edited by Dr. Norwood Andrews, Jr. and published jointly in 1967 by Phi Lambda Beta and Vanderbilt University, the following enlightening information can be found on page vii. "...Only nineteen - barely eight percent - refuse it [Portuguese] for the foreign language entrance requirement. It is unlikely that even these fail to accept it for general admission. To do so would be contrary to established admissions policy and might conceivably be illegal. Moreover, of the two hundred and thirty-six institutions accepting Portuguese, one hundred and twenty - more than half - teach it as well. As noted above, the group includes Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Vanderbilt, Berkeley, U.C.L.A., the whole Big Ten, West Point, Annapolis, etc. It should be evident that to question the validity of Portuguese as an academic subject is to question the aggregate judgment of higher education in the United States...." In spite of this information, which has been widely disseminated, the following statement was written by a teacher of Portuguese in the completed questionnaire returned to me. "...Sixteen students signed up for it [Portuguese]. Due to a misunderstanding about Portuguese being accepted by colleges, these students were not allowed to take Portuguese. Instead of dropping it, I preferred to teach a class of 2, hoping that next year, as I've been promised, all who sign up can take it...." This is a typical situation which has developed due to the lack of a test.

I know this situation personnally and the frustration that accompanies it. I lived with it for six years. Portuguese will not be able to compete with other languages because it will never be equally accepted as an academic subject until it is given equal status with other languages. Part of the solution is having a test. Surveys, statistics, statements by prominent educators, etc. will never change the attitude. Only the CEEB can change it because guidance counsellors and college admissions officers adhere strictly to the standards set forth by the CEEB.

There are now two bilingual centers in the United States where immigrant children are being educated in both English and Portuguese. One is located in Providence, Rhode Island and the other is in Artesia, California. Both Fall River and New Bedford participate in the Providence program, but New Bedford is formulating a proposal to have its own. In the Fall River-New Bedford area alone, there are approximately 1,800 children entering these programs annually. We have a literal reservoir of untapped talent which if channeled in the right direction could provide us with future native speakers of Portuguese for our Portuguese programs. Just think of the possibilities of training people in Portuguese from grade 1 through the Ph.D.

Dr. Rogers of Harvard has informed me that he has nearly completed a proficiency test which could be used by superintendents to determine the proficiency of prospective teachers of Portuguese. With such a test, a Portuguese Institute and the CEEB test there would be no hesitation on the part of administrators to establish Portuguese programs in their schools. We need quality as well as quantity if Portuguese is to survive and grow in the high schools.

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